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The Banat Problem

By

John Jivi-Banatanu

Editor of "America"

Roumanian Daily

CLEVELAND, O.

Published and Distributed by Roumanian

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FOREWORD!

To people living in the United States, the Banat of Temeshvar may seem very small and far away, and the proposed division of this province between Roumania and Serbia may seem relatively a matter of small importance at this time when the whole world is talking in world-sized figures.

The proposed division of the Banat, however, brings into question every principle for which the world war was fought, the right of every nation however small to complete territorial integrity, the rights of self-determination, the choice between diplomacy of the old order based on special interest, or diplomacy based on honest examination of facts. The problem of the Banat revives all of the old Balkan issues.

This article, frankly, is a statement of the Roumanian claims upon the whole of the Banat, claims which the writer believes must appeal not only to the American sense of justice but to the American instinct of common sense. It has for its purpose also to show that a just settlement of the Banat question and of all the questions in the Near East are of direct importance, not only to Roumanians but to Americans and to all others who sincerely desire world peace.

Gift

Author

JUL 29 1920

The Banat Problem

I.

STATEMENT OF CASE

The Banat problem may be briefly stated thus:

The Banat of Temeshvar is the province of what was once a part of Hungary which lies across the Danube river from Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. It is a rich province in agriculture, forests, minerals and other natural resources. Through it runs the main line of railroad from Paris and Berlin to Constantinople and the Near East.

Its population is made up mainly of Roumanians, Swabians (Germans), and Serbians, peoples who under centuries of Austrian and Hungarian domination have seldom had a chance to speak. The Roumanian population dominates completely the counties in the eastern half of the state and forms a relative majority even in most of the counties to the west. In the western counties, however, there are numerous large colonies of Serbians, although even there, the Swabians and Roumanians are more numerous.

It has been evident the Swabians could not control any part of the province since they are far removed from any other German state. Therefore since either Roumanians or Serbians must dominate, this proposal has been made:

That the Banat be divided by an arbitrary north and south line, the counties to the east-

ward being attached to Roumania and those to the west to Serbia.

Serbia has asked for this, maintaining Serbian control is necessary in the western provinces to protect the interests of the Serbian colonists, furthermore, that a foothold in the Banat is necessary to protect the approach to Belgrade, and Serbian propagandists have been very busy making a case at Paris.

Roumania says, however, this must not be done, and goes back into the history and ethnology of the Banat to demonstrate that this province is fundamentally a part of the Roumanian kingdom, that it is geographically a part of Roumania and that it must be reunited with the Roumanian kingdom, if there is to be any hope of permanent peace in the Balkans or of world peace.

PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

The facts which support these arguments will be presented later in this article. The purpose now is to show some of the principles which have been raised by the proposed settlement of the Banat problem, questions which involve the methods, if not the motives of the Paris conference.

Should any state or province ever be divided arbitrarily without respect for its history, its political and economic boundaries, or the wishes of the majority of its people?

Even in the settlement of individual estates it has been the axiom for ages to avoid arbitrary divisions of property, giving for instance, to one heir the horse, to another the wagon; to one the house and barn, to another the land

on which they rest; to one the mill pond, to another the control of the tributary waters.

How much more dangerous then in settling the estates of nations to follow this arbitrary method, for the lands and properties of nations cannot be partitioned without partitioning also the human beings who are inseparable from them. The causes of the world war were found in such mistakes.

The method of settlement proposed for the Banat is the old, old "cut-and-try" method which the Great Powers have always used in dealing with their neighbors in the Near East. And with what terrible results?

MISTAKES OF PAST

Let us survey for a minute some of the mistakes made in the Near East in the past.

"From time immemorial, Europe has been confronted with an Eastern Question," writes J. A. R. Marriott in his "Historical Study in European Diplomacy," and John Morley describes "that shifting, intractable, and interwoven tangle of conflicting interests, rival people and antagonistic faiths" which he considers under the one heading of "Balkanism, the Unsolved Eastern Question."

But why has there been this interwoven tangle of conflicting interests? Has it really been a tangle of the interests of the Balkan people themselves or of the interests of the various Great Powers which had in the Balkans something at stake? Has not history proved the Great Powers in the past always ready to set the Balkan nations against each other,

always anxious to keep them weak, to prevent them from working out their national destinies?

There is no denying this, as Herbert Adams Gibbons points out in the *Century Magazine* for March 1920 in an article on Roumania:

“To prevent the Balkan states from forming an alliance and securing national unity the Great Powers at Paris in 1856 and at Berlin in 1878 arranged frontiers in such a way as to kindle the animosity of one Balkan race against another.”

It was in 1878 that Bessarabia was taken away from Roumania and given to Russia in violation of the most sacred pledges of friendship. Of the reason why none of the other Great Powers made a move to protect Roumania against this steal by Russia, Marriott in his book, “*The Eastern Question*,” p. 305, makes this illuminating comment:

“That was a gross blunder, the consequences of which are not yet exhausted, yet we could not turn aside from the pursuit of larger issues to befriend a state in whose fortunes Great Britain was not directly interested.”

“SOMEBODY’S” INTERESTS

So it has been always in the Near East. Self interest first. And the self interest of the Great Powers has always dictated the little states of the Near East should be retarded in development, for were a single great state to grow to maturity there, it would no longer be possible to dictate policies which make possible exploitation by outside interests.

Now in the Banat problem. Isn't it the same fundamental principle at stake? Borrow-

ing from Peter to pay Paul. Taking from Roumania to satisfy the debt to Serbia. With no real thought for the rights in the case. With no real thought for the future. With little or no regard for the wishes of the majority of the people who have their homes in the Banat.

Roumania's ethnical, economic and historic destiny can never be complete without the whole of the Banat. And yet to Serbia the addition of a portion of the Banat would be of relatively little future importance. Immediate desires would be satisfied so far as Serbia is concerned. But Roumania would be left with a new "Irredenta." To-day "The League of Banat"—a great organization to redeem the whole province—is the immediate result.

Thus it will be seen the Banat affords a real opportunity for Americans, an opportunity to see that in this one case, at least, the old order of "high diplomacy" with reference to the Near East is not perpetuated. It was for this purpose Americans entered the war, to see that in all international affairs right should succeed special privilege.

II.

ETHNICAL

AND

GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

Consider the geographical boundaries of the Banat and it will be seen readily that it is a distinct unit, one which under any circumstances would not be easily divisible into two parts under separate governments, but which is all the

harder to partition because the whole is so obviously a part of the Greater Roumania and proper sphere of influence.

The Banat lies on a sloping shoulder of land which leads down from the Carpathian mountains. The walls of the Carpathians are the eastern boundary. On the other three sides are rivers, broad and navigable most of their length.

On the north, the river Maros comes down from the mountains between the Banat and the redeemed Roumanian province of Transylvania. On the west, the Theiss forms the boundary to the turning point where it joins the Danube. And the Danube forms the southern boundary running between the Banat and Serbia all the way to the Iron Gates.

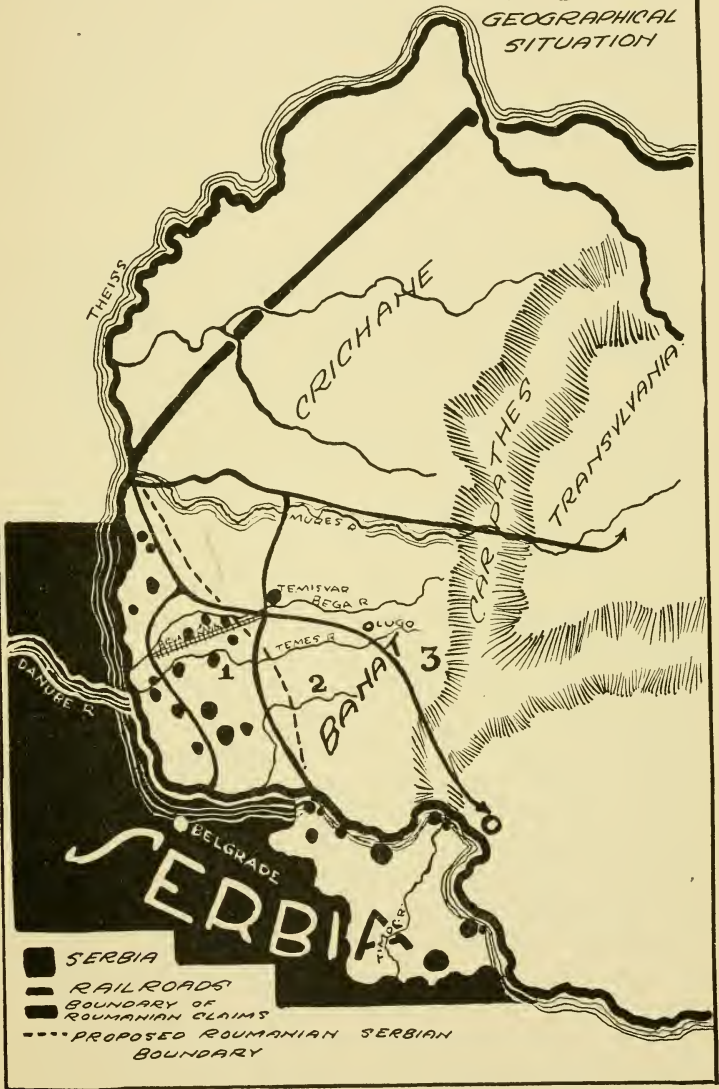
The Banat is thus an essential part of that portion of reunited Roumania which lies west of the Carpathian mountains. It fills in the space between Transylvania and the Danube. It is essential that Roumania retain the whole of the Banat if there is to be free egress by river water-ways from Transylvania to the rest of the kingdom. If the Serbian claim to a foothold in the Banat is allowed it will be the same as establishing a foreign toll gate through which all Roumanian water traffic must pass. (See Map No. 1).

BANAT ALWAYS A UNIT

Not only is the Banat now a geographical unit but it has always been a unit politically no matter what rule it might be enduring. And it has been a characteristically Roumanian province ever since the second century when the

FROM MAP *by* ALBERT THOMAS
 FORMER FRENCH MINISTER OF MUNITION

NO 1
 GEOGRAPHICAL
 SITUATION



MAP No. 1. This map shows how the Banat, geographically, is a part of the Greater Roumanian unit, the southwest cornerstone of the Kingdom. Bounded by the Danube, the Theiss and the Muresh rivers, it fills out the provinces regained from Hungary in Transylvania and Crichana. To take away any part of the Banat and give it to Serbia would be to destroy geographical unity and isolate the Roumanians of the west by preventing communication with the Roumanians of the east through the Danubian system.

Roman colonists planted by Trajan mingled with the original Dacians to form the Roumanian race. Long before the Magyars or Hungarians came, or the Serbian or Swabian German colonists, the Banat was a powerful and autonomous Roumanian state. The Magyars conquered only after the death of Prince Glad.

History adequately reveals the relatively small importance of the various efforts by nationalities other than the Roumanians to dominate the Banat. Most of these colonies came either as the result of persecutions in their home land or upon invitation of the Austrian and Hungarian governments which wished to reduce the importance of the Roumanians everywhere.

EARLY IMMIGRANTS

The first colonists were the Serbs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They came under the leadership of the patriarch Arsenie Cernoevici, after their country had been invaded by the Turks. There had been a handful of Serbians in the Banat and southern Hungary even prior to this, after the defeat by the Turks at Kossovo in the fourteenth century, but those pioneers were only a handful.

When the Banat was in turn conquered by the Turks in 1552, the Roumanian natives and the Serbian colonists alike were driven to refuge. The Serbians pressed on farther north. The Roumanians, for the most part, were compressed into the hilly counties in the eastern part of the Banat near the Carpathians, although some of

them remained in the western lowlands even during Turkish occupation.

The Turks were driven out of the Banat in 1718, and when they left, the western part of the province was almost but not wholly deserted. Religious persecutions by the Magyars had succeeded Turkish oppression in confining the Roumanians to the eastern counties.

It was at this time the Serbians took advantage of the situation of the Roumanian population in the Banat to cross the Theiss and the Danube in great numbers, and migrations begun then were continued almost down to the present time.

It would be hard to say whether all these Serb migrations were voluntary or whether many were under compulsion, for numbers doubtless were included in forced colonizations listed in K. Von Czoernig's book "Ethnographie der Oesterreichischen" (Vienna, 1855) which details such occurrences from 1720 to 1846.

ROUMANIANS PREDOMINATE

It will suffice to point out the following facts. The population of the Banat despite early Serb migrations had been left almost pure Roumanian after the Turks receded in 1718. By 1910, according to official Hungarian statistics, there were 592,049 Roumanians; 284,328 Serbians in the province and 387,547 Swabian (Germans), and 76,058 persons of other national origins.

But despite forced colonization under Austrian and Hungarian suzerainty and despite voluntary immigration due to the richness of the country, and despite the persecution and

suppression of the Roumanians in all parts of the Banat, they had maintained a clear majority in the whole province. Out of a total population of 1,582,133 in the Banat, the Roumanians, even by Hungarian count, numbered 592,049.

A word as to Hungarian statistics. They have always been notoriously corrupt and unfair to the Roumanians. In 1900, for instance, the Hungarians claimed only 170,124 Magyars in the Banat. In their 1910 census they claimed more than double this number. According to the Hungarians, the Roumanian population in the same time had increased only from 578,789 to 592,049. These figures alone are sufficient to indicate contraband census methods.

Most historians in dealing with census figures on Roumanian population in districts under Magyar rule prefer to use religious statistics. Using these church figures in his "Notes Sur La Guerre Roumaine," N. P. Commene, a French writer, determines the Roumanian population in the Banat at 615,336 and the Serbian population at only 284,328 as compared with the Magyar figures of 592,049. This probably is nearly correct.

SWABIANS NUMEROUS

It will be noticed at once that the Swabian (German) population in the Banat, as well as the Roumanian, outnumbers the Serbian element. And the Swabians we know are almost unanimous in declaring they want to be attached to the Roumanian kingdom. The Roumanians alone, if a plebescite were held would be able to carry the vote for union with Roumania. Aided by the Swabians, the vote against



MAP No. 2

In this map, all areas in plain white indicate areas where Roumanian population predominates. Thus it will be seen that in Serbia, itself, just south of the Danube in the Timoc valley, there is a large region where the population is almost entirely Roumanian, with the Serbian population appearing only in isolated groups (shown by black dots). Roumania makes no claim to these 290,000 Roumanians who happen to be living in Serbia proper.

division of the Banat with Serbia, would be overwhelming.

Serbia has acknowledged the weakness of her position in relinquishing her claim to the whole of the Banat and contending only for the western part where the Serbian colonists are thickest. But there is a situation which makes even this claim an absurdity. In Serbia proper, south of the Danube near the Iron Gates, in the valley of the Timoc river, there are large colonies of pure Roumanians. (See Map No. 2).

Roumania does not for this reason lay claim to a slice of Serbian territory. The Roumanians in the Timoc valley, more than 290,000, form a compact mass in the Serbian provinces of Pozharevatz, Kraina, and Tchernia-Rieka. They happen to have made their homes within the ethnical boundaries of Serbia and bow to that fact. The Serbians in the Banat and the Serbian government should be equally reasonable as regards their claims in Roumanian territory.

President Wilson in his address to the United States Senate, Jan. 22, 1917, in speaking of the purposes of nationalities said:

“Peace cannot be had without concession and sacrifice. The statesmen of the world must plan for peace, and nations must adjust and accommodate their policy to it in the same way as in the past they have planned for war and made ready for pitiless contest and rivalry.”

SACRIFICES OF PEACE

Peace cannot be had without sacrifice of selfish and unnatural ambition whether in the case of the individual or of a nation. The

Roumanians have made their concession in not demanding the Roumanian population of the Timoc valley and Southern Serbia. The Serbians likewise must be made to give up their unnatural claims upon the Banat.

The diplomats who have discussed seriously the plan for partitioning the Banat between Roumania and Serbia have considered only one of the many facts which must be considered. They have looked upon the Serbian colonies in the Banat alone. They have not considered properly the ethnology, the history and most of all the geography of the Banat. Their remedy is almost purely philosophical, provisional and impracticable. Americans must bring pressure to bear on these diplomats to see they do not favor Serbian claims which in this case, instead of following the principle laid down by President Wilson, have been pressed to the point of absurdity.

III.

SERBIAN CLAIMS ANALYZED

What has preceded has shown how futile would be any attempts by the Serbian propagandists to justify their claims to the Banat partition on purely ethnical grounds. The Roumanians were beyond doubt the original people of the Banat. The Serbians at best have never been more than refugees or colonists. Let us examine nevertheless the claims of the Serbians that they really do form the most considerable element in the western counties of the province. There is no dispute as to Roumanian preponderance in the eastern, mountainous

county of Caras-Severin where the Roumanians form 72 per cent. of the population and the Serbs but 3 per cent.

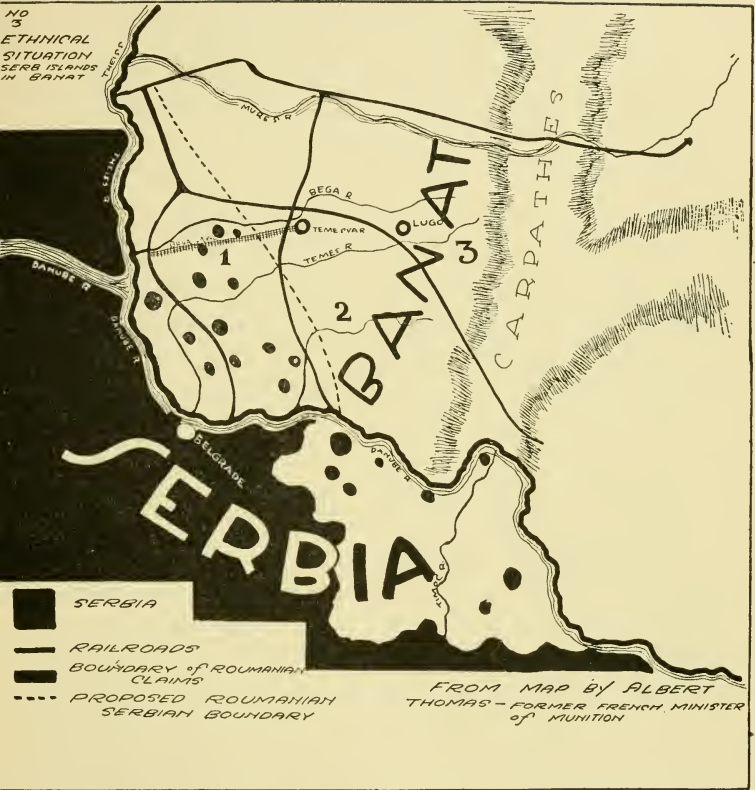
The other two counties, Timis and Torontal have a total population of 1,105,000, of which only 266,000 are Serbs, even according to generous estimates. This gives them only 22 per cent in those counties. They originally claimed both these counties but as G. Mironesco pointed out in "The Problem of the Banat," "even the moderate Serbs understood it was ridiculous to assert that a territory should belong to a population which did not form even a quarter of the total population." Hence their claims are now limited to Torontal only.

But even in the Torontal the Serbs do not form a majority. Out of a total population there of 615,151, the Serbs have only 199,750 or 32.04 per cent. The rest are Swabians and Roumanians mostly. And the Swabians not only desire to be united with the Roumanian kingdom but they speak Roumanian, recognizing it as the proper language of the province, and are prepared for Roumanian citizenship.

SERBIAN "ISLANDS"

An examination of the situation in the whole Banat by districts within the counties is even more significant. The Roumanians have an absolute majority in 18 districts and a relative majority in three out of a total of 39. The Swabians, who are Roumanians in sympathy, have an absolute majority in 11 districts and a relative majority in seven. The Serbs by contrast have an absolute majority in only three districts and a relative majority in three. And

NO 3
ETHNICAL
SITUATION
SERB ISLANDS
IN BANAT



FROM MAP BY ALBERT THOMAS - FORMER FRENCH MINISTER OF MUNITION

MAP No. 3

The sparseness of the Serbian population in the Banat is shown here by the black dots in the field of white which indicates Roumanian predominance. The Serbian population in the Banat is confined to islands in the sea of Roumania and other nationalities, islands which show plainly the Serbs were merely colonists and not original inhabitants.

it is important to note (Map No. 3) the Serbians even in these districts have no geographical cohesion: They form little islands of Serbs in the sea of Roumanians and Swabians.

The districts where the Serbs have an absolute majority are Feher-Templom, Torobece and Antfalva. Let us see how they are separated. Between Feher-Templom and Antfalva is a Roumanian-Swabian zone. Between Torobece and Antfalva is a non-Serbian zone, chiefly Swabian.

“The western part of the Banat resembles a piece of ethnic mosaic work” declared Prof. Cholnoky Jone, of Cluj university. He was a Hungarian, at that, and no friend of Roumania.

IV.

A FAIR OFFER

Roumania has made a proposal which would give a fair solution to the problem of the Banat. In addition to renouncing all claims to the 400,000 Roumanians living in Serbia proper, including the Timoc valley, Roumania has offered to cede to Bulgaria certain territory in Dobrudja in order to persuade Bulgaria to cede to Serbia the Serbian areas in Bulgaria at Widin which are adjoining Serbia proper.

This would be a sensible readjustment which would go far all round to make peace in the Balkans and the Near East, but the Serbians have rejected it, refusing to make the sacrifices which President Wilson has declared all nations should be ready to make for the sake of future peace. Roumania has gone far to meet the spirit of President Wilson's appeal and can do

no more. This compromise failing, her claims to the whole of the Banat now are presented on the basis of cold facts.

The Roumanians would welcome settlement now by a plebescite for the whole of the Banat, including the Swabian population, a plebescite free from all suspicion of foreign desire or influence.

AMERICANS CAN HELP

The French and Italians have already pronounced themselves in favor of giving the whole of the Banat to Roumania. But the support of the Americans who are as Turgot, the great French economist predicted in 1782, "the hope of mankind," is needed. The Americans can do much so that it will not be said of this peace as Claredon said of the treaty of Paris in 1856, "We have made the peace but it is not THE PEACE, because we have left so much in an unsettled state."

And this should be done, not only because the Roumanians in the Banat would otherwise be left unsatisfied but because the Swabians would be discontented. The Serbians have asked that the Swabians be not considered in the settlement of the Banat problem "because they are so far away from any German state."

The Supreme Council must see this is no reason at all. President Wilson has said:

"Peace must be planted on the tested foundation of political liberty. We fought to assure the rights of nations great and small, and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and obedience."

Not to take into consideration the historic

and ethnic rights of the Roumanians to the whole of the Banat would be to violate the deepest principles of justice. Not to take into account the wishes of the 387,545 Swabians, as the Serbs insist, would be to disregard President Wilson's injunction that all people have the right to choose their own way of life and obedience. Nor do the Roumanians disregard the very important rights of the Serbians in the Banat. The Roumanians cannot allow them to divide a province on claims which are relatively superficial and unimportant, but they do promise them under the Roumanian government which would be established as the result of a plebescite, full rights with other citizens in ordering and adjusting that government. No more surely could be done than that.

V.

HISTORICAL FACTS

"Banatul Timisoarei" is the Roumanian title for the Banat although it never was governed by a Ban (the equivalent of a French marquisate). The Banat seems to have acquired this title after the peace of Passarowitz when the Turks had been driven out in 1718. In ancient times the Banat was a part of the Roumanian principality of Transylvania.

When Trajan descended on the kingdom of the ancient Dacians in the second century, he made his headquarters at Jidovini in the Timis valley. The Romans built a road which is still seen today. They named the mineral spring of Mehadia "Thermae Herculis," a name

which the Roumanians, children of the Romans and the Dacians, have preserved.

The Hungarians, the last of the Barbarians to invade the Banat, found the Roumanians there well organized after the traditions of their Roman and Dacian fathers and many bloody battles were fought for domination of the territory. After the death of Prince Glad, the Roumanians and the Hungarians came to an understanding which existed through the tenth and the thirteenth century, although as usual there were many infringements on the agreement by the Huns.

In 1552, when the Turks came, the Banat was made a Turkish sanjak or province, that is, all except the eastern part where the Roumanians true to the example of their Dacian forefathers held their independence in the hills. The Turks were driven out in 1716, but after the peace of Passarowitz in 1718, the Austrian Hapsburgs placed the province under military administration which they prolonged till 1751, in order to give excuse for religious persecutions of the Roumanian population.

SERBS AID AUSTRIA

There was, at this time, a distinct effort to annihilate the Roumanian majority in the province, and it was to further this purpose the great colonies of Serbians were brought in. Count Claudius Marcy, appointed governor of Tenesvar in 1720, with the consent of Empress Maria Theresa, also brought in large numbers of German peasants and placed them on lands claimed by the crown.

In 1779, the Banat was turned over by the Austrians from their own misrule to the misrule

of the Hungarians, but after the revolution of 1848-1849 it was taken back again with the county of Bacs and made an Austrian crown land. In 1860, however, the Banat became again and for the last time a subject of Hungary.

It is not necessary, however, to trace all the events of Austrian and Hungarian misrule. It is necessary to controvert certain historical claims presented by the Serbian propagandists after finding the weakness of their ethnical rights in the Banat.

The Serbians claim to have had at times a distinct Serbian organization of the Banat, a "Voivodia", or principality. This is not exactly correct. The Serbian Voivodia was administrative and not a political unit and it was never independent. It was a creation of the Hapsburg government designed to favor the Serbs and crush the Roumanians.

A CLAIM EXPLODED

Examine the records of the Voivodia. You will find them in German and not in Serbian. This is final proof the Voivodia was the instrument not of Serbian independence but of Austrian oppression.

Destroy this claim and you have remaining only the claim that the Serbians have lived long in the Banat. But they themselves admit they were never more than colonists, and at that, imported by the Austrians with the hope of crowding out and denationalizing the Roumanians.

It is a significant fact that instead of crowding out or assimilating the Roumanians the Serbians in the Banat have to a large extent

been Roumanianized. They speak the Roumanian language. They are economically dependent on their Roumanian neighbors. The Banat is another striking example of the tenacity of Roumanian national life which was attested as long ago as the fifth century by Priscus, a Byzantine historian, sent by Emperor Theodosius II to the court of Attila, the Hun chieftain.

History only drives one back to ethnology or brings one face to face with the statistical facts regarding the Banat as they stand today. The proof that the Banat, the whole of it, belongs to Roumania and is indomitably Roumanian, cannot be gainsaid.

VI.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

After all other claims and counter claims regarding the Banat have been considered and analyzed it is necessary to consider and analyze what is said about the Banat as an economic problem.

The Roumanians claim the Banat is a unit industrially and commercially just as it is geographically and therefore must not be broken up. They point to the great coal and iron mines in the eastern part of the province, to the systems of canals and railways and rivers which have been developed with the Banat as a unit and show that no part can be taken away without tremendous injury to itself and to the rest of the province.

The Serbians, on the other hand blandly insist they must have the western county of

Torontal, although they can advance only one economic reason, and even this very much exaggerated. They say the Torontal is a rich agricultural land in which there are many Serbian farmers and hence it should be added to Serbia to compensate for the agricultural poverty of the mountainous land within the borders of Serbia proper.

Forgetting for the moment all that has been said regarding the injustice and impracticability of the Serbian scheme in the light of history and ethnology and military expediency. Let us see the economic effect:

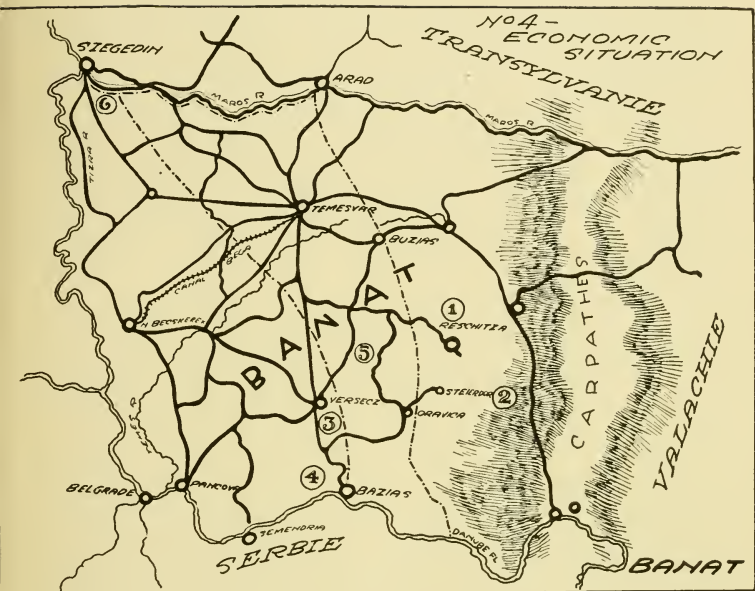
WOULD CHOKE INDUSTRY

It is as though the people of Great Britain and Canada were to say to the United States:

“We have a large number of French Canadians and English Canadians living in the state of Michigan. Now, you already have more states than you need. Therefore we will take Michigan. It will help our agriculture and it will give us a foothold in your country to guarantee us against invasion by your forces.”

It is as absurd to say the Torontal is absolutely essential to the food supply of Serbia as to say the addition of Michigan to Canada would produce any appreciable effect. What would result is this:

If Canada took Michigan you would have at the straits of the St. Clair river a toll station controlled by a foreign power which could and probably would exact tribute from all passing traffic. Instead of a great open waterway between the two powers permitting the full development of each you would have a closed



MAP No. 4

The dotted line from Arad to the Danube shows the original Serbian claim in the Banat, abandoned voluntarily on the face of its absurdity. The dotted line from near Segedin to Bazias on the Danube show the present Serbian claim to practically the whole county of the Torontal. It will be seen at a glance if this claim is allowed the whole Roumanian railway system will be cut in two and an overlordship established on the Roumanian water rights in the Maros, the Theiss and the Danube.

waterway, a superficial means of profit to the one, a lasting detriment to the other.

It is not the land loss of the Torontal or even the loss of the products of that county which Roumania fears most. It is the lasting damage to her industry and commerce.

If the whole Great Lakes system were not an open waterway the development of the whole region in the United States which borders on it would be stunted and checked. This is what will happen in the Banat if Serbia is given the foothold she desires across the Danube and the Theiss.

RIVER TRADE THREATENED

If Serbia is allowed to hold the Torontal, she will control completely the waterways of the Theiss and the Danube for all traffic going through. More than that she will control not only these rivers but the Temes river and the Bega canal which come down from the interior of the Banat. And she will block the through railways from Western Europe to Constantinople and the railways which lead from the industrial regions in the eastern portion of the Banat. And finally, she will control the river traffic coming down the Maros and the Theiss not only from the Banat but from Transylvania. An intolerable condition will exist. (See Map No. 4)

Nature was very ingenious in laying out the Banat. The mountainous eastern part of the country was provided with deep wells of iron, copper, tin, lead and zinc, and plenty of the best steam coal. It was fitted to be a modern industrial region. And the western plains ad-

joining this region were made for the growing of wheat, barley, oats, rye, maize and with flax hemp to meet the needs of the industrial workers of the eastern part.

Only 27.15 per cent of the land near the mountains is arable, but the western fields more than make up for this deficiency. Now let us see what will happen if Serbia gets the principal food bearing district of the province.

At Resitza and Anina (marked 1 and 2 on Map No. 4) near Steirdorf are the great steel rolling mills, and the great coal mines. There are the industries which for years have supplied all the rolling stock and rails for the Austro-Hungarian railways. There are resources which, when developed, will supply not only Roumania but all of Eastern Europe.

RAILROADS ALSO AFFECTED

But the natural outlet for this region is by the railways leading down through the lowlands which Serbia claims. If Serbia gets the Torontal, the natural rail lines (marked 3 and 4 on Map No. 4) will be cut off and the road to the Danube will be cut off. Because of the mountainous nature of the country it would not be feasible to build new lines in strictly Roumanian territory east of the proposed boundary. The only outlet for the products of this region would be by way of the one mountain railroad now in existence (marked 5 on Map No. 4). This is the winding, over tunnelled, steep-graded line from Oravica to the Reschitza railroad and it is altogether unsatisfactory.

And after getting heavy steel products to the Reschitza line, there would be further difficul-

ties because the line from there to Temesvar is already overcrowded and inadequate. And after getting to Temesvar, the problems of distribution to all parts of the country would have been only begun, for it still would be necessary to follow circuitous overland routes to get around the Carpathians without cutting through a foreign country.

It is obvious what would happen to the coal, steel and iron country. Walled in by the impregnable Carpathians on the east and by the Serbian tollgates on the west, it would pine and dwindle. Roumania, needing transportation today more than ever in its history would receive small relief from this territory.

WOULD ISOLATE TEMESVAR

And what of the important city of Temesvar itself, accustomed to handling more than 8,500 trunks of fir and more than 400,000 tons of merchandise annually. Many of its principal railroads from the west and southwest would be in Serbian hands. And the Bega canal leading out to the Theiss and the Danube would likewise be in the control of strangers.

All this could lead only to unrest and trouble, possibly war at some future date.

The proposed division of the Banat could create an economic situation which far from relieving the food shortage of Serbia or providing that country with military protection would only lead to new dangers and distress.

Must Belgrade be protected and provisioned by a portion of the Banat? It has been pointed out with wisdom that Belgrade has long ceased to be the logical capital of Serbia, and except in

name only, is even now merely a provincial city. It is safe to predict the time will come when the Serbian capital will be transferred to some city nearer the heart of that country. So there is little in the argument that Belgrade must be rationed and protected by a slice from the Banat. This military argument of the Serbs because of the extraordinary progress in methods made during this war loses all value.

REAL SERB OBJECTIVES

It is obvious that the real Serbian objective is the control of the Banat waterways which are vital to Roumania's future. Let us consider the actual size and importance of these streams. Hungarian figures follow:

The Muresh or Maros river between the Banat and Transylvania has 118 kilometers navigable for steamboats.

The Temesh river which taps the heart of the Banat has 88 kilometers navigable for barges and three kilometers where steamboats can go.

The Theiss from the confluence of the Muresh to the junction with the Danube has 180 kilometers navigated by steamboats.

The Danube from the mouth of the Theiss to Verciorova at the Iron Gates offers 250 kilometers navigable by steamboats.

In all there are 666 kilometers, 460 of them in the comitat of Torontal itself which would be directly affected if control were given to Serbia. But these figures only tell a small part of the story. All through navigation on the whole Danubian system from the Black Sea to the navigation head would thus be placed under

Serbian domination. Not only Roumania, but Hungary and Austria and all other countries directly or indirectly dependent on Danube traffic, would suffer. Not only justice to the Roumanian claims on the Banat but economic justice to all Central Europe demand that the Danube be kept open.

THE ITALIAN PARALLEL.

It is interesting now to contrast the handling of the Banat problem with that of the similar problem of the Italian littoral on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. In its findings on the Banat problem the Peace Conference has exactly reversed the position it took in the earlier dispute.

In the dispute between Italy and Jugoslavia, President Wilson was among those who at first agreed to an Italian frontier running from the Arsa river to the Karawanken mountains, a frontier which would have given to Italy more than 300,000 Jugoslavs.

France, Great Britain and the United States shared in a memorandum signed Dec. 9, 1919 which said:

“Italy’s geographical position, as well as her economic requirements, is held to justify this serious infringement of ethnical principle.”

For Italy, geography and economics are made to apply despite ethnology. For Roumania in the Banat, despite the fact there is no dispute as to the justice of her claims either geographically, economically or ethnologically, a portion of the province is about to be torn away and handed as a pawn to Serbia. Why should not

the principle which applies to the littoral of the Adriatic be applied in the even stronger case of the littoral of the Theiss and the Danube?

Mr. A. J. Balfour in his Mansion House speech in 1903 cynically forecasted the present situation as regards Serbia.

“The weaker power first leans on one European government, then on another European government,” said he, “intrigues with both, does everything to bring the two into conflict, in the hope it may come out the better for it.”

But Lloyd George declared on Sept. 6, 1917:

“This is pre-eminently the day of small nations.”

And President Wilson declared in the United States Senate on Jan. 22, 1917:

“People must not be handed about from potentate to potentate as if they were property.”

Let us see to it that through the unjust reversion in the solution of the Banat problem we do not go back to the ironic rule laid down by Mr. Balfour so long before the war. Let us follow rather the ideals set forth during the war.

In working out the economic problems of Roumania let there be as much justice as in working out the economic salvation of Italy.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion it will be sufficient merely to point out the following points which have been established:

1. The Serbians never having been more than colonists in the Banat cannot well contest

the ethnical claims advanced by the Roumanians who beyond all doubt are the original inhabitants of the province.

2. In history, because of the role which they played as instruments of the Hapsburg and Hungarian oppressors, the Serbs can find no justification for their claims. Never have they ruled or had any important part in free government in the Banat, while the history of Roumania and the history of the Banat in the struggle for independence are inseparable.

3. A glance at any map shows the Banat to be a geographical unit, properly a part of the new Greater Roumania.

4. Economic principles demand that the whole of the Banat be restored to Roumania, for otherwise neither Roumania nor the Banat itself can be developed in accordance with their rich promise.

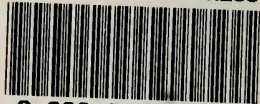
5. A plebescite of the people anywhere in the Banat would give the province back to Roumania.

In the old selfish principles which have been revealed in the proposed settlement of the Banat question by a partition between Roumania and Serbia, there is invoked an issue which cannot be ignored by Americans.

It is this:

Shall the old "high diplomacy" be restored in the Near East? Shall one nation there be set against another? Shall there be a settlement of mere convenience and not of justice? Or shall we see to it that there is no peace of mind among the diplomats at Paris until there is actual peace in the Near East?

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